

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff

V.

CRIMINAL 06-0215 (ADC)

[1] PABLO J. VÁZQUEZ-ORTIZ,

Defendant

MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
RE: RULE 11(c)(1)(B) PROCEEDINGS (PLEA OF GUILTY)

I. Personal Background

On July 5, 2006, Pablo J. Vázquez-Ortiz, the defendant herein, was charged in a two count-indictment. The defendant agrees to plea guilty to both counts of the indictment.

Count one charges that the defendant aided and abetted by another, did with the intent to cause death or serious bodily harm to Raúl Rivera-Rivera, that is, by striking him on the left side of his face with an unknown object, take from the person or presence of said person by force, violence and intimidation a motor vehicle, that is, a 1985 Suzuki Forsa automobile, Vehicle Identification Number JS2AA41S3F5106386, that had been transported, shipped or received in interstate or foreign commerce, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2 and § 2119(2).

Count two charges that defendant, aided and abetted by another, did knowingly use and carry a firearm, as this term is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(3), that is, one firearm of unknown brand, caliber or serial number, during and in relation to a crime of violence, as that term is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 924(c)(3) to wit: an armed motor vehicle theft (“carjacking”), as charged in count one, herein

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3 an offense for which the defendant herein may be prosecuted in a court of the
4 United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2 and § 924(c)(1)(A)(ii).

5 Defendant filed a motion for change of plea on September 18, 2006.

6 II. Consent to Proceed Before a Magistrate Judge

7 On October 17, 2006, while assisted by Víctor González-Bothwell, Esq., the
8 defendant, by consent, appeared before me in order to change his previous not guilty
9 plea to a plea of guilty as to both counts of the indictment.10 In open court the defendant was questioned as to the purpose of the hearing
11 being held. The defendant responded that the purpose of the hearing was to plead
12 guilty. The defendant was advised of his right to have all proceedings, including the
13 change of plea hearing, before a United States district judge. Defendant was given
14 notice of: (a) the nature and purpose of the hearing; (b) the fact that all inquiries
15 were to be conducted under oath and that it was expected that his answers would
16 be truthful (he was also explained that the consequences of lying under oath could
17 lead to a perjury charge); and (c) his right to have the change of plea proceedings
18 presided over by a district judge instead of a magistrate judge. The defendant was
19 also explained the differences between the appointment and functions of the two.
20 The defendant consent to proceed before this magistrate judge.

21 III. Proceedings Under Rule 11, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure

22 A. Compliance With Requirements Rule 11(c)(1)

23 Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure governs the
24 acceptance of guilty pleas to federal criminal violations. Pursuant to
25 Rule 11, in order for a plea of guilty to constitute a valid waiver of the
26 defendant's right to trial, guilty pleas must be knowing and voluntary:
27 "Rule 11 was intended to ensure that a defendant who pleads guilty
28 does so with an 'understanding of the nature of the charge and
consequences of his plea.'" United States v. Cotal-Crespo, 47 F.3d 1, 4
(1st Cir. 1995) (quoting McCarthy v. United States, 394 U.S. 459, 467
(1969)). [There are three core concerns in these proceedings]: 1)
absence of coercion; 2) understanding of the charges; and 3) knowledge

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of the consequences of the guilty plea. United States v. Cotal-Crespo, 47 F.3d at 4 (citing United States v. Allard, 926 F.2d 1237, 1244-45 (1st Cir. 1991)).

United States v. Hernández-Wilson, 186 F.3d 1, 5 (1st Cir. 1999).

In response to further questioning, defendant was explained and he understood that if convicted on count one, the penalty for the offense charged in count one is a term of imprisonment for not more than 15 years, a fine of not more than \$250,000, or both, and a term of supervised release of not more than three years in addition to any term of incarceration. For count two, the penalty is a term of imprisonment of not less than five years, a fine of not more than \$250,000, or both, and a term of supervised release of not more than three years in addition to any term of incarceration. Any term of imprisonment imposed for count two shall be consecutive to any other term of imprisonment imposed herein.

The court must impose a mandatory penalty assessment of \$100, per offense, to be deposited in the Crime Victim Fund, pursuant 18 U.S.C. § 3013.

Defendant was advised that the ultimate sentence was a matter solely for the court to decide in its discretion and that, even if the maximum imprisonment term and fine were to be imposed upon him, he later could not withdraw his guilty plea if he was unhappy with the sentence of the court. The defendant understood this.

Defendant was explained what the supervised release term means. It was emphasized that cooperation with the United States Probation officer would assist the court in reaching a fair sentence.

Emphasis was made on the fact that at this stage, no prediction or promises as to the sentence to be imposed could be made by anyone. Defendant responded to questions in that no promises, threats, inducements or predictions as to what sentence will be imposed have been made to him.

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B. Admonishment of Constitutional Rights

To assure defendant's understanding and awareness of his rights, defendant was advised of his right:

1. To remain silent at trial and be presumed innocent, since it is the government who has the burden of proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

2. To testify or not to testify at trial, and that no comment could be made by the prosecution in relation to his decision not to testify.

3. To a speedy trial before a district judge and a jury, at which he would be entitled to see and cross examine the government witnesses, present evidence on his behalf, and challenge the government's evidence.

4. To have a unanimous verdict rendered by a jury of twelve persons which would have to be convinced of defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt by means of competent evidence.

5. To use the subpoena power of the court to compel the attendance of witnesses.

Upon listening to the defendant's responses, observing his demeanor and his speaking with his attorney, that to the best of counsel's belief defendant had fully understood his rights, it is determined that defendant is aware of his constitutional rights.

C. Consequences of Pleading Guilty

Upon advising defendant of his constitutional rights, he was further advised of the consequences of pleading guilty. Specifically, defendant was advised that by pleading guilty and upon having his guilty plea accepted by the court, he will be giving up the above rights and would be convicted solely on his statement that he is guilty.

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Furthermore, the defendant was admonished of the fact that by pleading guilty he would not be allowed later on to withdraw his plea because he eventually might disagree with the sentence imposed, and that when he were under supervised release, and upon violating the conditions of such release, that privilege could be revoked and he could be required to serve an additional term of imprisonment. He was also explained that parole has been abolished.

D. Plea Agreement

The parties have entered into a written plea agreement that, upon being signed by the government, defense attorney and defendant, was filed and made part of the record. Defendant was clearly warned and recognized having understood that:

1. The plea agreement is not binding upon the sentencing court.

2. The plea agreement is an "agreement" between the defendant, defense attorney and the attorney for the government which is presented as a recommendation to the court in regards to the applicable sentencing adjustments and guidelines, which are advisory.

3. The agreement provides a sentencing recommendation and/or anticipated sentencing guideline computation, that can be either accepted or rejected by the sentencing court.

4. In spite of the plea agreement and any sentencing recommendation contained therein, the sentencing court retains full discretion to reject such plea agreement and impose any sentence up to the possible maximum penalty prescribed by statute.

Defendant acknowledged having understood this explanation.

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3 E. Government's Evidence (Basis in Fact)

4 The government presented a proffer of its evidence with which the defendant
5 basically concurred.

6 Accordingly, it is determined that there is a basis in fact and evidence to
7 establish all elements of the offense charged.

8 F. Voluntariness

9 The defendant accepted that no leniency had been promised, no threats had
10 been made to induce him to plead guilty and that he did not feel pressured to plead
11 guilty. He came to the hearing for the purpose of pleading guilty and listened
12 attentively as the prosecutor outlined the facts which it would prove if the case had
13 proceeded to trial.

14 IV. Conclusion

15 The defendant, by consent, has appeared before me pursuant to Rule 11,
16 Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and has entered a plea of guilty as to both
17 counts of the indictment.

18 After cautioning and examining the defendant under oath and in open court,
19 concerning each of the subject matters mentioned in Rule 11, as described in the
20 preceding sections, I find that the defendant Pablo J. Vázquez-Ortiz is competent to
21 enter this guilty plea, is aware of the nature of the offense charged and the
22 maximum statutory penalties that the same carries, understands that the charge is
23 supported by the government's evidence, has admitted to every element of the
24 offense charged, and has done so in an intelligent and voluntary manner with full
25 knowledge of the consequences of his guilty plea.

26 Therefore, I recommend that the court accept the guilty plea of the defendant
27 and that the defendant be adjudged guilty as to both counts of the indictment.

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3 This report and recommendation is filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B)
4 and Rule 72(d) of the Local Rules of Court. Any objections to the same must be
5 specific and must be filed with the Clerk of Court within five (5) days of its receipt.
6 Rule 510.1, Local Rules of Court; Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). Failure to timely file specific
7 objections to the report and recommendation is a waiver of the right to review by the
8 district court. United States v. Valencia-Copete, 792 F.2d 4 (1st Cir. 1986).

9 At San Juan, Puerto Rico, this 20th day of October, 2006.

11 S/ JUSTO ARENAS
12 Chief United States Magistrate Judge